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SUBJECT: CHISINAU CITY COUNCIL SHIFTS FROM OPPOSITION TO COMMUNIST CONTROL

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please Protect Accordingly.

**¶1.** (SBU) Summary: One year after the Liberal Party won Chisinau's mayoralty and made its president Chairman of the Chisinau Municipal Council, the Party of Communists (PCRM) has created a new alliance within the council that has deposed the former chairman and installed a new chairman in his place. Thus, despite losing the June 2007 local elections in Chisinau, the PCRM now controls the majority in the Municipal Council. End summary.

Municipal Council Chairman Ghimpu Replaced by Musuc

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**¶2.** (SBU) One year after the landslide victory that swept the Liberal Party's young reform-minded candidate Dorin Chirtoaca into power as mayor of Chisinau, the Chisinau Municipal Council has come under the control of anti-Chirtoaca forces. By winning the support of Edward Musuc's Social Democratic party and several non-affiliated deputies, the Party of Communists was able to form a new majority in the council. This new coalition (which also includes Iurie Rosca's Christian Democrats) voted on June 6 to elect Musuc to replace Mihai Ghimpu (the Mayor's uncle) as council chairman. Though Ghimpu and his supporters disputed the results for two weeks, by June 26 Musuc succeeded in chairing a council meeting.

Fragile Coalition Yields to New Majority

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**¶3.** (SBU) Following the June 2007 local elections, the position of Chairman of Chisinau Municipal Council was the subject of long dispute. After four months of ineffectual squabbling and three failed votes, on October 11, 2007, the Chisinau Municipal Council finally managed to elect Mihai Ghimpu as Council head by a narrow majority of 27 of the 51 council votes. Under Ghimpu's leadership the Municipal Council was confronted by numerous challenges that could barely be resolved by the unstable governing coalition that lacked PCRM backing.

**¶4.** (SBU) Over the course of Ghimpu's tenure, Musuc and several other deputies had repeatedly expressed their unhappiness with Ghimpu's chairmanship. On June 6, a proposal to elect Musuc as chairman passed with support from 28 out of 51 councilmen. The new ruling majority that supported Musuc included the PCRM, Iurie Rosca's Christian Democrats, Braghis and Musuc's Social Democrat Party and several non-affiliated councilmen. Though Ghimpu's supporters at first refused to recognize Musuc's leadership during a two-week standoff, the Liberal-led coalition eventually recognized its defeat. President Voronin met with Musuc on June 23.

**¶5.** (SBU) On June 26 Musuc chaired a meeting of the Chisinau Municipal Council. This chaotic session was filled with mutual accusations. Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca refused to take his normal place next to the chairman and instead stood in the back. Though Ghimpu and his supporters were not pleased, Ghimpu sat with the other

councilmen, and Musuc chaired from the podium during the contentious session. Though Musuc was formerly an ardent anti-Communist, who had been imprisoned by law-enforcement authorities for 47 days on charges of financial impropriety, he appears to have been won over to the PCRM coalition by promises of power and influence.

Comment

¶ 6. (SBU) The latest developments in the Chisinau administration point to a new strategy for turning defeat into victory through the creation of new post-election alliances. We are also witnessing some regroupings in local administrations (raions). A year after the Communists similarly lost power in two-thirds of Moldova's raions, the fragile patchwork of unstable anti-Communist coalitions is eroding in some of these districts. In several raions, there have now been changes in chairman or deputy chairman of the raion council as part of a regrouping process.

¶ 7. (SBU) Looking towards 2009, the polls show that the PCRM is unlikely to obtain sufficient seats to elect the President on its own. At the same time, opposition parties are also too weak and dispersed to win a clean majority. In the months leading up to the 2009 parliamentary elections, we expect the PCRM will increase pressure to break down non-Communist coalitions at the local level, thus gaining additional administrative leverage and further discrediting the opposition. Similarly, in 2009 we can expect that the PCRM will seek post-electoral allies to form a majority coalition in the parliament. End comment.